

1 AN ACT concerning education.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is
5 amended by adding Section 62 as follows:

6 (110 ILCS 947/62 new)

7 Sec. 62. Grants for exonerated persons.

8 (a) In this Section:

9 "Exonerated person" means an individual who has received a
10 pardon from the Governor of the State of Illinois stating that
11 such a pardon is issued on the grounds of innocence of the
12 crime for which he or she was imprisoned or an individual who
13 has received a certificate of innocence from a circuit court
14 pursuant to Section 2-702 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

15 "Satisfactory academic progress" means the qualified
16 applicant's maintenance of minimum standards of academic
17 performance, consistent with requirements for maintaining
18 federal financial aid eligibility, as determined by the
19 institution of higher learning.

20 (b) Subject to a separate appropriation for this purpose,
21 the Commission shall, each year, receive and consider
22 applications for grant assistance under this Section.
23 Recipients of grants issued by the Commission in accordance

1 with this Section must be exonerated persons. Provided that the
2 recipient is maintaining satisfactory academic progress, the
3 funds from the grant may be used to pay up to 8 semesters or 12
4 quarters of full payment of tuition and mandatory fees at any
5 public university or public community college located in this
6 State for either full or part-time study. This benefit may be
7 used for undergraduate or graduate study.

8 In addition, an exonerated person who has not yet received
9 a high school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate
10 and completes a high school equivalency preparation course
11 through an Illinois Community College Board-approved provider
12 may use grant funds to pay costs associated with obtaining a
13 high school equivalency certificate, including payment of the
14 cost of the high school equivalency test and up to one retest
15 on each test module, and any additional fees that may be
16 required in order to obtain an Illinois High School Equivalency
17 Certificate or an official transcript of test scores after
18 successful completion of the high school equivalency test.

19 (c) An applicant for a grant under this Section need not
20 demonstrate financial need to qualify for the benefits.

21 (d) The Commission may adopt any rules necessary to
22 implement and administer this Section.